DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 328 515 SP 032 706

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TITLE Beginning Teachers' Perceptions of Their Proficiency in Teaching Skills.
PUB DATE Jun 90
NOTE 14p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Beginning Teachers; Elementary Secondary Education; Field Experience Programs; Followup Studies; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; Internship Programs; *Outcomes of Education; Program Effectiveness; Questionnaires; Rating Scales; *Self Efficacy; *Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Education Programs; *Teaching Skills
IDENTIFIERS University of Regina SK

ABSTRACT

A study undertaken by the Faculty of Education at the University of Regina, Saskatchewan, sought to determine beginning teachers' perceptions of their own abilities in 15 teaching skills and strategies and the degree of importance of various components of the teacher education program in developing these skills. Forty-three questionnaires were returned from teachers who had graduated from the university in 1989. Data analysis showed that, as a group, the beginning teachers perceived themselves as having a high ability in 10 skills and average ability in the remaining 5 skills. They rated internship highest in terms of its contribution to the development of all skills except two. In these two skills they rated internship second. Preinternship field experiences were rated next to internship, followed by professional studies courses, subject area classes, educational psychology classes, and courses in educational foundations and educational administration. Faculty gave similar ratings to these components in the teacher education program. A listing of the university's education program requirements, a copy of the questionnaire, and tables displaying the data on the estimate of proficiency and sources of development rating scales comprise the major part of this document. (JD)

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ED328515

BEGINNING TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR PROFICIENCY IN TEACHING SKILLS

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June 1990

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SP 032 706

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Introduction

The overarching goal of the Faculty of Education at the University of Regina is to prepare excellent professional teachers to meet the instructional and developmental needs of students in Saskatchewan. In order to work towards this goal the Faculty has incorporated the following elements in its program.

Subject Area Classes

For elementary teachers - 8 classes in curriculum areas.

For secondary teachers - classes in major and minor areas.

Preinternship EPSY Classes

For elementary teachers - EPSY 206 - Educational Psychology for Teachers.

For secondary teachers - EPSY 350 - The Psychology of Learning and Adolescent Development.

Professional Studies

For elementary teachers - EPS 226 - A Basic Course in Skills and Strategies.

For secondary teachers - EPS 200 - Principles and Practices of Secondary Teaching I.

For secondary teachers - EPS 350 - Principles and Practices of Secondary Teaching II.

Preinternship Field Experiences

For elementary and secondary students - on-campus labs.

For elementary teachers - 1 day/week in school plus two week block.

For secondary teachers - 2 blocks of 1 and 2 weeks respectively.

Internship

Both elementary and secondary teachers - 16 weeks in school.

Educational Foundation/Administration Class

Both elementary and secondary teachers - at least one class in educational foundations is required. A class in educational administration is allowed as a substitute. In addition secondary teachers are also required to have a class in educational administration.

Other Program Components

OCRE - Usually 2 half-week off-campus residential experiences.

Modules - Several modules are part of both elementary and secondary programs

Advisor-Advisee Meetings - Weekly meetings are held.

Internship Seminar - Both elementary and secondary students are required to attend this.

Teaching Skills and Strategies

Teaching is a complex activity which requires many skills and strategies. On the basis of literature review and discussion among colleagues this writer identified the following skills as very important in a teacher education program:

1. Preparing lesson plans and unit plans.
2. Motivating students to learn.
3. Creating a positive classroom climate for learning.
4. Involving students in the learning process.
5. Using textbooks and curriculum guides effectively.
6. Using a variety of teaching skills and strategies.
7. Using educational media and technology.
8. Enhancing intercultural understanding in the classroom.
9. Maintaining classroom discipline.
10. Diagnosing student difficulties.
11. Adapting instruction to meet needs of gifted learners.
12. Individualizing instruction to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities.
13. Evaluating student progress.
14. Communicating effectively with parents.
15. Analyzing and evaluating one's own teaching performance.

Purpose of the Study

Various components of the teacher education program in the Faculty of Education at the University of Regina contribute to the development of these skills in students. The purpose of this study was to determine (i) the beginning teachers' perceptions of their own abilities in the skills identified above and (ii) the degree of importance of various program components in developing these skills.

Method

In order to carry on the investigation a questionnaire consisting of four sections was developed for this study. Section A required the respondents to provide background information about their age, type of school, grade(s) taught, etc. Section B asked the respondents to rate their proficiencies in the 15 teaching skills and strategies on a 5-point scale, from 1 (low) to 5 (high). In Section C beginning teachers were asked to rate the sources of their skill development. Section D had an open-ended question in which respondents were asked to comment on up to three program components that made a significant contribution to their development as a beginning teacher. A copy of the questionnaire is attached in Appendix I.

A list of 165 teachers who graduated from the University of Regina and had completed their first year of teaching was prepared from a larger list of all beginning teachers obtained from Saskatchewan Education. The questionnaire with a forwarding letter and a self-addressed stamped envelope was mailed to these teachers in November 1989. A large number of these questionnaires were returned as undelivered. Apparently, the information available was not updated. After about four weeks a follow-up letter was sent. Forty-three questionnaires were received as completed.

Findings

The data from the 43 questionnaires was analyzed and resulted in the findings presented below by sections as used in the questionnaire. It may be noted that percentages have been rounded off and only major findings are included.

Section A: Background Information

Total Respondents: 43

Gender Distribution: Male = 11 or 26%
Female = 32 or 74%

Age: 21-25 years = 26 or 61%
26-30 years = 12 or 28%

Program: Elementary = 31 or 74%
Secondary = 4 or 9%

Type of School: Rural = 25 or 58%
Urban = 18 or 42%

Grade(s) Taught: Multigrade = 35 or 81%

Employment: Full-time = 39 or 91%
Part-time = 4 or 9%

Section B: Proficiency Estimate

As a group beginning teachers perceive themselves as having a high ability (close to 4 on a point of 5-point scale) in most skills. The skills in which they consider themselves as average were:

using educational media and technology;
enhancing intercultural understanding in the classroom;
adapting instruction to meet the needs of gifted learners;
individualizing instruction to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities.

They did not consider themselves low in any skills and strategies (See Appendix II for details)

Section C: Sources of Development

Internship was rated #1 in terms of its contribution to the development of all skills except two. In these two skills, internship was rated #2. Preinternship field experiences were rated next to internship in terms of their importance in developing these skills. Next in importance generally were professional studies courses. Subject area classes in education were usually rated next following by educational psychology classes. Classes in educational foundations and educational administration were rated the lowest. Faculty generally hold similar kinds of ratings of these components in its teacher education programs (See Appendix III for overall ratings of various program components.)

Section D: Open-Ended Question

Respondents generally reiterated their ratings of program components as given in the previous section.

Concluding Statement

Beginning teachers generally have a positive perception of their proficiencies in important teaching skills and strategies. They find internship as most important in terms of their preparation for teaching. Other components of the program were also considered important. The rating given to educational foundation and educational administration courses was lower.

BEGINNING TEACHER'S SURVEY

Section A

1. Your Name: _____
   Last First

2. School: _____

3. School Address: _____

4. What is your gender?

   ____ 1. Male
   ____ 2. Female

5. What is your age?

   ____ 1. 16-20
   ____ 2. 21-25
   ____ 3. 26-30
   ____ 4. 31-35
   ____ 5. 36-40
   ____ 6. 41-45
   ____ 7. 46-50
   ____ 8. 51 and over

6. In what program were you enrolled at the University of Regina?

   ____ 1. Elementary
   ____ 2. Elementary SUNTEP
   ____ 3. Elementary NORTEP
   ____ 4. Elementary-Indian Education
   ____ 5. Secondary
   ____ 6. B.Ed (After Degree) Elementary
   ____ 7. B.Ed (After Degree) Secondary
   ____ 8. B.Ed General
   ____ 9. Arts Education
   ____10. B. Music Ed
   ____11. Baccalaureate Education (BAC)
   ____12. Other (Please specify) _____

7. At what type of school do you teach

____ 1. K - 6
____ 2. K - 8 or 9
____ 3. K - 12
____ 4. Other (Please specify) _____

8. Where is your present school located?

____ 1. Large urban centers (Regina, Saskatoon)
____ 2. Prince Albert, Yorkton, North Battleford
____ 3. Swift Current, Moose Jaw, Estevan, Weyburn
____ 4. Other locations in Saskatchewan

9. What grade(s) do you teach?

____ 1. Kindergarten
____ 2. Grade 1
____ 3. Grade 2
____ 4. Grade 3
____ 5. Grade 4
____ 6. Grade 5
____ 7. Grade 6
____ 8. Grade 7
____ 9. Grade 8
____10. Grade 9
____11. Grade 10
____12. Grade 11
____13. Grade 12
____14. Multigrade Classroom

10. What were your major and minor or specializations? The elementary and middle year programs provide for specializations and the secondary program provides for major(s) and minor(s). Please indicate major by M-1, double majors by M-1 & M-2, Minor by M-3, double minors by M-3 & M-4, and specializations by S-1, S-2, & S-3.

____ 1. Early Childhood
____ 2. French - Core
French - Education
____ 3. Health
____ 4. Outdoor Education
____ 5. Physical Education
____ 6. Mathematics
____ 7. Music Education
____ 8. Reading
____ 9. Language Arts
____10. Science
____ 11. Social Studies
____ 12. Visual Ed
____ 13. Ed. Foundations
____ 14. Religious Ed
____ 15. Library Science
____ 16. Middle Year Guidance & Counselling
____ 17. Special Education
____ 18. Business Ed.
____ 19. Computer Science
____ 20. Secondary English

11. Are you employed full time or part-time?

____ 1. Full Time?
____ 2. Part Time

Section B: Estimate of Your Proficiency

Please indicate an estimate of your current proficiency in the skills listed below by circling the appropriate number against each.

Your ability to:	High		Average		Low
1. Prepare lesson plans and unit plans	5	4	3	2	1
2. Motivate students to learn	5	4	3	2	1
3. Create a positive classroom climate for learning	5	4	3	2	1
4. Involve students in the learning process	5	4	3	2	1
5. Use textbooks and curriculum guides effectively	5	4	3	2	1
6. Use a variety of teaching skills and strategies	5	4	3	2	1
7. Use educational media and technology	5	4	3	2	1
8. Enhance intercultural understanding in the classroom	5	4	3	2	1
9. Maintain classroom discipline	5	4	3	2	1
10. Diagnose student difficulties	5	4	3	2	1
11. Adapt instruction to meet the needs of gifted learners	5	4	3	2	1
12. Individualize instruction to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities	5	4	3	2	1
13. Evaluate student progress	5	4	3	2	1
14. Communicate effectively with parents	5	4	3	2	1
15. Analyze and evaluate your teaching performance	5	4	3	2	1

Section C: Sources of Development

Please reflect on your preservice teacher education program and rank the sources of development of your abilities from 7 to 1 for each item, 7 being the most important and 1 being the least important. Please write the appropriate number in each box.

Your ability to:	Subject Area classes in education	EPSY classes	EFDN classes	Preintern-ship field experiences	Intern-ship	Other
1. Prepare lesson plans and unit plans						
2. Motivate students to learn						
3. Create a positive classroom climate for learning						
4. Involve students in the learning process						
5. Use textbooks and curriculum guides effectively						
6. Use a variety of teaching skills and strategies						
7. Use educational media and technology						
8. Enhance intercultural understanding in the classroom						
9. Maintain classroom discipline						
10. Diagnose student difficulties						
11. Adapt instruction to meet needs of gifted learners						
12. Individualize instruction to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities						
13. Evaluate student progress						
14. Communicate effectively with parents						
15. Analyze and evaluate your teaching performance			11			

Section D: Significant Components

Please list and comment on up to three components of the program that made a significant contribution to your development as a beginning teacher. (The program consists of classes in education, classes outside of education, preinternship field experiences, modules, OCRE, advisor-advisee meetings, internship).

Please check here if you would like to get a summary of findings when it is available.

_____ Yes, I would like to get a summary.

Thank you for your cooperation. Please return the questionnaire in the enclosed self-addressed envelope.

Appendix II

ESTIMATE OF YOUR PROFICIENCY

Your ability to:	High		Average		Low
1. Prepare lesson plans and unit plans	5	4	3	2	1
2. Motivate students to learn	5	4	3	2	1
3. Create a positive classroom climate for learning	5	4	3	2	1
4. Involve students in the learning process	5	4	3	2	1
5. Use textbooks and curriculum guides effectively	5	4	3	2	1
6. Use a variety of teaching skills and strategies	5	4	3	2	1
7. Use educational media and technology	5	4	3	2	1
8. Enhance intercultural understanding in the classroom	5	4	3	2	1
9. Maintain classroom discipline	5	4	3	2	1
10. Diagnose student difficulties	5	4	3	2	1
11. Adapt instruction to meet the needs of gifted learners	5	4	3	2	1
12. Individualize instruction to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities	5	4	3	2	1
13. Evaluate student progress	5	4	3	2	1
14. Communicate effectively with parents	5	4	3	2	1
15. Analyze and evaluate your teaching performance	5	4	3	2	1

SOURCES OF DEVELOPMENT

Appendix III

Your ability to:	Subject Area classes in education	EPSY classes	EFDN classes	Preintern-ship field experiences	Intern-ship	Prof. Studies
1. Prepare lesson plans and unit plans	4	5	6	2	1	3
2. Motivate students to learn	4	5	6	2	1	3
3. Create a positive classroom climate for learning	3.5	5	6	2	1	3.5
4. Involve students in the learning process	4	5	6	2	1	3
5. Use textbooks and curriculum guides effectively	1.5	5	6	1.5	1	4
6. Use a variety of teaching skills and strategies	4	5	6	2	1	3
7. Use educational media and technology	1	5	6	3	2	4
8. Enhance intercultural understanding in the classroom	4	5	6	2	1	3
9. Maintain classroom discipline	5	4	6	2	1	3
10. Diagnose student difficulties	5	4	6	2	1	3
11. Adapt instruction to meet needs of gifted learners	4	3	6	2	1	5
12. Individualize instruction to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities	5	2	6	3	1	4
13. Evaluate student progress	4	5	6	2	1	3
14. Communicate effectively with parents	5	4	6	2	1	3
15. Analyze and evaluate your teaching performance	4	5	6	2	2	1